DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 025 549 UD 006 723

By- Bernard, Viola W.

School Desegregation--Some Psychiatric Implications.

Pub Date May 58

Note- 11p.

Journal Cit- Psychiatry; v21 n2 p149-158 May 1958

EDRS Price MF-$0.25 HC-$0.65

Descriptors- Behavior Change, Behavior Problems, Caucasians, *Changing Attitudes, *Discriminatory Attitudes (Social), Intermarriage, Negroes, Negro Stereotypes, Psychoeducational Processes, *Psychological Patterns, *Race Relations, Student Adjustment

Identifiers- Arkansas, Little Rock, Supreme Court School Desegregation Decision

This article discusses the psychodynamics of Negro-white relations and the transitional stress which individuals experience in reaction to school desegregation. Described in particular are the negative implications of segregation and racial prejudices, both for those who discriminate and those who are discriminated against. It is noted that intergroup prejudice may stem from an individual's personal anxieties or childhood conditioning. The stereotyped idea of Negro inferiority, fears of intermarriage, and interracial sexual fears are specifically discussed, and a distinction is drawn between racial problems and the disguising of nonracial problems, such as socioeconomic and educational deprivation, by attributing them to race. To change these attitudes of prejudice within a community, educators, parents, community leaders and mental health personnel must evince firm leadership and a well-defined policy. (LB)

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PSYCHIATRY

JOURNAL FOR THE STUDY OF INTERPERSONAL PROCESSES

VOLUME TWENTY-ONE MAY, 1958 NUMBER TWO

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Subscription Ten Dollars for 1958 Foreign Postage Eighty Cents Additional

Published Quarterly by The William Alanson White Psychiatric Foundation, Inc. Entered as second class matter, April 26, 1938, at the Post Office at Baltimore, Maryland, under the Act of March 3, 1879. Office of Publication, 1601 Edison Highway, Baltimore 13, Md. Address all communications to the office of the Foundation, 1703 Rhode Island Ave., N. W., Washington 6, D. C.

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ED025548 UD 006 723

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School Desegregation—Some Psychiatric Implications†

Viola W. Bernard*

DURING THE PERIOD since the Supreme Court Decision against school segregation in May, 1954, more than 300,000 Negro children and several times that number of white children have experienced or become eligible for interracial schooling for the first time.[1] Desegregation is thus demonstrably possible, a fact that seems to need emphasizing at the outset of this paper lest the greater publicity about instances of disturbance than about those of uneventful change-over may lead to the impression that the difficulties of desegregation outweigh its advantages. Recognition that desegregation can be accomplished smoothly, however, does not imply false minimizing of the many psychological problems that are entailed for all concerned in the course of this large-scale readjustment.

Some psychological strain is a concomitant of every form of rapid change. This particular social change engenders especial heat because it involves exceptionally strong emotional conflicts and deeply rooted attitudes and behavior patterns. As psychiatrists, our appropriate contribution toward reducing the difficulties of desegregation is through the understanding we have acquired about personality development, behavior, and human relations, in general, and about racial prejudice, segregation, and intergroup relations, in particular.

A year has elapsed between the writing and publishing of this paper. It has been an eventful year for desegregation. Despite these developments I shall not now revise my remarks, since it would be impossible to keep them caught up with all the fast-moving changes in such an active, dynamic process as school desegregation. Instead, the reader should look to the constantly evolving literature on the subject to keep pace with events.

The tense laboratory of Little Rock has demonstrated some of the general principles of this psychosocial change with powerful concreteness, from which there is much to be learned. There are those, like Ashmore, Editor of the Arkansas Gazette, who interpret the situation in Little Rock as only a contemporary temper tantrum that will inevitably give way to orderly compliance with the law.[2] Others see it as evidence that the South will not accept the Supreme Court Decision; indeed, no school desegregation

[2] Harry S. Ashmore, *An Epitaph for Dixie;* New York, Norton, 1957.

* B.Sc. N.Y. Univ. 33; M.D. Cornell Univ. Med. Coll. 36; Intern, Jersey City Med. Center 37-38; Asst. Res. Psychiatry, Psychiatric Inst., Grasslands Hosp., Valhalla, N.Y. 38-39; Res. in Psychiatry, N.Y. State Psychiatric Inst. and Hosp., New York 39-40; part-time psychiatrist, Bureau of Child Guidance, N.Y. City Board of Education 40-43; part-time faculty, N.Y. Psychoanalytic Inst. 43-47; part-time faculty, N.Y. School of Social Work, 43-45, 47-49, 52-56; Assoc. in Psychiatry 48-55, Asst. Clin. Prof. Psychiatry 55-57, Assoc. Clin. Prof. Psychiatry, Columbia Univ. 57-; Dir. of Community Psychiatry, Dept. Psychiatry, Columbia Univ. and the School of Public Health and Administrative Medicine 57-; collaborating staff, Psychoanalytic Clinic for Training and Research, Columbia Univ. 56-. Private practice psychoanalysis and psychiatry 41-; Diplomate, Amer. Bd. Psychiat. and Neurol. 46. Member: Amer. Psychoanalytic Assn., Amer. Psychosomatic Soc., Group for Advancement of Psychiatry. Fellow: Amer. Psychiatric Assn., Amer. Orthopsychiatric Assn., N.Y. Academy of Medicine. Treasurer, Amer. Academy of Child Psychiatry.

† This paper, in substantially the same form, was read at the annual meeting of the American Psychiatric Association, May 16, 1957.

[1] The most recent figures, reported since this paper was originally presented, cite 377,286 Negro students and 1,952,761 white students in integrated situations. See *Statistical Summary, State by State of Segregation-Desegregation Activity, Affecting Southern Schools from 1954 to Present, together with Pertinent Data on Enrollment, Teacher Pay, etc.;* Nashville, Tenn., Southern Education Reporting Service, February 1, 1958.

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has been carried out as yet in the "Deep South." [3] Meanwhile, now, six months after Governor Faubus called out the National Guard in September, 1957, to bar nine Negro children from the all-white Central High School in defiance of a Federal Court order, reports indicate a continued high level of tension there. Two recent articles describe how "a handful of anti-integration extremists dominates the law-abiding—but unorganized—masses with the techniques of terror." [4]

The atmosphere within the school has deteriorated from the mental health standpoint. White segregationist students, reinforced by their parents, have carried the Capitol Citizens' Council's psychological warfare into the school itself. Not only are the nine Negro children subjected to harassment, threats, and physical and psychological abuse; educators and many white children and their parents who would otherwise treat the Negro children with some measure of acceptance and friendliness have been intimidated by various forms of reprisals, including social ostracism, economic boycott, and bomb threats. A preponderance of fear, hate, cruelty, and painful inner conflict corrodes school life at Central High School. Much of the responsibility for sparking and fanning the emotional flames, and for failing to check them, would seem to lie with those in positions of leadership.

Before I proceed further, it seems desirable that I be explicit about my own professional position with regard to segregation from the mental health standpoint. Briefly, my interpretation of the available scientific evidence and of my own rather widely varied clinical experience is that enforced segregation has detrimental effects on personality development and functioning, both for those who impose or condone it, and for those upon whom it is imposed. Rather than trying to amplify and substantiate this statement at this point, I shall hope to accomplish this to some extent throughout the following pages.

Many facets of the complex issue of segregation are outside the psychiatrist's immediate sphere of competence, such as the primarily economic, historical, legal, and political aspects. The mental health of school children, however, does lie directly within our area of responsibility—especially for those psychiatrists who have regularly worked closely with educators to foster and protect mental health through school experience. To the psychiatrist who thus practices community and preventive psychiatry through the school setting, the Supreme Court's Decision provides an opportunity to improve the level of mental health for the nation's youth. For the Decision specifically seeks to protect children from the hazards to healthy personality development implicit in segregated schooling. To achieve this long-range mental health goal, profound social, educational, and psychological changes are in process, proceeding in different ways and at different rates throughout the nation. Inevitably, this process arouses transitional stress reactions. School desegregation, therefore, poses challenges as well as opportunities for the mental health professions, which we can most suitably meet by extending our general psychodynamic insight to the specifics of this psychosocial change.

Of the many complexities germane to this topic, my discussion will center mainly on the following three themes: some of the psychodynamics of traditional Negro-white relationships in this country; some psychodynamics of attitude change; and distinctions between racial problems and the disguising of nonracial problems by attributing them to race. My remarks will draw in part on a recent report on *Psychiatric Aspects of School Desegregation,* on which I have collaborated.[5] Since that report is documented by many bibliographical references, I shall in the main omit such references in this paper.

[3] John Bartlow Martin, *The Deep South Says Never;* New York, Ballantine Books, 1957.

[4] Gertrude Samuels, "The Silent Fear in Little Rock," *The New York Times Sunday Magazine,* March 30, 1958; p. 11. See also Gertrude Samuels, "Little Rock: More Tension Than Ever," *The New York Times Sunday Magazine,* March 23, 1958.

[5] *Psychiatric Aspects of School Desegregation,* Report No. 37, formulated by the Committee on Social Issues of The Group for the Advancement of Psychiatry; May, 1957.

The psychological power of racial prejudice has been crucial to bringing about and maintaining segregation as a form of racial discrimination. In turn, the unrealistic fears and hostilities, intergroup misperceptions, and deficiencies of genuine communication between Negroes and whites that stem from segregation serve to reinforce race prejudice. Desegregation involves counterforces toward reversing these vicious cycles of attitude, especially for the children, teachers, and parents of both races who are most directly involved in this new experience. From what we know of the deep emotional entrenchment of such attitudes, the magnitude of psychological changes at stake becomes apparent. People are prejudiced in many varying forms and degrees, with marked individual differences as to the emotional significance of racial prejudice in their total psychic economy. Racial prejudice may also have different dynamic meanings to the same person at different periods, or under different conditions, as is conspicuous for children at various age levels, or in diverse settings. Thus, the same youngster may relate to age mates of the other race differently as an adolescent than he did during his latency or preschool phases of development, and again differently at a dance than in the classroom. Furthermore, anti-Negro prejudice, although it is in special focus in considering school desegregation, is but one of many prevailing intergroup prejudices, such as anti-Semitism, which may psychologically supplement or replace each other.

Racial prejudice is not bounded by geography and is to be found in all sections of this country, although its expression through legal school segregation has been concentrated in the South. However, *de facto* school segregation occurs in some Northern communities as an outcome of segregated housing or, at times, of such covert forms of discrimination as gerrymandering. Conversely, many more white Southerners than those who dare speak openly are opposed to segregation, as are the majority of Southern Negroes whose voice is also muted by intimidation and relative lack of access to communication channels. Besides, most Americans, whether from the North or South, have some degree of mixed and conflicted feelings about race, whether they realize it or not. The prevailing regional laws and customs, however, do strongly influence which of their existent contradictory feelings they accept or suppress. Where young children are taught that white supremacy is morally right, feelings they may have to the contrary are experienced as wrong, and vice versa. It makes a big difference, psychologically and in the person's social behavior, whether he approves or is ashamed of his own prejudiced attitudes, as well as what he perceives the attitudes to be of those whose approval he wants or needs. The Supreme Court has now reversed the legal sanction for educational discrimination of Negro children throughout the nation. This cannot help but have some bearing on feelings of prejudice, but just how, when, and to what extent will depend on many complex variables.

My purpose in elaborating some of these psychological features of racial prejudice is not to keep belaboring its harmfulness from the mental health standpoint, but to provide a basis for appreciating the adaptive position of those entering desegregated school experience after a lifetime of segregation. According to the racially prejudiced view, Negroes as a group warrant the lowered social status accorded them by segregation because of their essential inferiority to white people. This means that personal worth, of either a white or Negro person, is measured solely by group membership, regardless of individual merit. Such a measure is realistically false and of necessity distorts the developing self-image of Negro and white children, as well as their view of each other. Under these psychological circumstances, the Negro child, for example, is burdened with inescapable inferiority feelings, a fixed ceiling to his aspiration level which can constrict the development of his potentialities, and a sense of humiliation and resentment which can entail patterns of hatred

against himself and his own group, as well as against the dominant white group. The white child is provided with an effortless means of enhanced prestige through comparison to the downgraded Negro group. This deprives him of the strengthening experience of earning self-esteem through real growth and achievement. The white child, to the detriment of his character development, has a sanctioned outlet for venting aggressive feelings on a total group without penalty, and the Negro child is offered an excuse for antisocial behavior and evasion of social responsibility through feeling deprived of the social rewards for self-denial, which are part of a healthy socialization process. But since these reactions are at variance with the democratic ideal and many other teachings to which the children of both races are exposed at home, at church, and at school, they arouse of necessity feelings of inner conflict, confusion, anxiety, and guilt. These constitute liabilities for optimal adjustment. Of course, there is wide individual variation as to the depth and intensity of such personal conflicts, the psychological methods of attempted conflict-solution, and the many growth-related ingredients in each child's specific endowment and life experience that can offset or magnify these injurious effects of prejudice.

But if racial prejudice is harmful and the assumption of inherent Negro inferiority without factual foundations, why then are these attitudes so tenaciously maintained in defiance of logic, science, or morality? As already indicated, people oppose desegregation and subscribe to racial prejudice for many different kinds of reasons, which cannot be detailed within the limits of this brief paper. Thus, some are motivated more by their need to conform to dominant group mores than from genuinely prejudicial feelings of their own. For others, racial prejudice mainly means compliance to their early childhood conditioning, while still others unconsciously use prejudice as a rationalization through which to seek solutions for personal problems of many kinds.

As psychiatrists, we have come to understand that unconscious wishes, fears, and defenses can account for people's clinging to irrational attitudes in the face of reality-testing. Many people retain their racial prejudice because of the psychological purposes they feel it serves them, although such purposes may be unconscious and self-defeating. The mental mechanisms of repression, compensation, projection, displacement, and reaction-formation figure prominently in these intrapsychic and interpersonal transactions. For example, collective devaluation of Negroes provides compensatory self-aggrandizement to some insecure whites for feeling inadequate or disadvantaged. Because of the primitive type of morality which prejudice attributes to them, Negroes as a group are used as a target by certain white people for the projection of their own self-prohibited or unacceptable traits. This permits reduction of personal guilt feelings or social censure by the displacement of blame and suppressive, punitive measures on to the scapegoat group. In reaction, some Negroes use the objective injustice of this as an opportunity to relieve or ward off feelings of personal inadequacy, self-contempt, or self-reproach by projecting all the blame on to white prejudice and discrimination. For other Negroes, however, reaction-formation becomes a main defense against the negative racial image projected on to them by majority-group prejudice; thus, they may develop extremes of moralistic, prudish, and compulsively meticulous attributes to prove themselves the antithesis of the stereotype. It should also be noted that intense emotional opposition to racial prejudice may, through the operation of these mental mechanisms, serve comparable personal ends. For prejudice, like sin, can be exploited by zealous reformers, unconsciously, to gain rationalized self-importance and moral superiority, as well as social justification for displaced hostility outlets.

All of these illustrations of psychological advantage from prejudice, for members of both races, are clearly maladaptive ways for handling personal problems. Nevertheless, their value to the given

person, although fundamentally spurious, accounts for some of the deep emotional resistance to letting go of the irrational attitudes of racial prejudice. By understanding this, we can better help newly desegregating teachers and children to develop more realistic, healthier ways of meeting their needs for security and self-esteem.

Those of us who wrote the psychiatric report on desegregation, already referred to, considered racial myth-formation as a psychological defense against various inner anxieties that stem from the person's developmental history. These racial myths steretotype Negroes as "intellectually and morally inferior, childish and irresponsible, and supposedly unable to control allegedly excessive sexual and aggressive impulses." [6] Such mythology rationalizes and justifies white superiority and the segregation which is based on it, thereby maintaining a feedback of prejudice; consequences of segregation such as lower standards of living and education for Negroes and the results of these are misinterpreted as evidence of Negro inferiority to further bolster the myth. Interpersonal relations between Negroes and whites based on such racial myths are, of necessity, strained and lacking in full, genuine interchange. Yet the claim is often made by those who believe in segregation that Negroes and whites get along more amicably under conditions of legal segregation, citing undeniable racial tensions to be found in Northern communities. It is indeed true that warm and affectionate feelings can and do exist between Negro and white people within the framework of segregation, especially when established on positive emotional experience in early life. However, the rigidity of role-stereotyping, intrinsic to segregation, seriously limits the freedom and completeness of these relationships. The required mutual role accommodations to the white supremacy myth is at the expense of personality maturity of both groups, as illustrated, for instance, by the benevolent white person with respect to the deferential Negro.

[6] Reference footnote 5; p. 17.

School desegregation is a process, not an event. Processes of significant attitude change in Negro-white relations were under way throughout the nation before the Supreme Court Decision. There had been a growing body of successful experience with voluntary desegregation, which constituted preparation for the acceleration of attitude change now entailed in implementing the Decision.

It seems useful to distinguish between the terms *school desegregation* and *school integration.* Desegregation refers to objective behavioral changes in patterns of school life. Integration, on the other hand, is a matter of interaction between people and therefore pertains to subjective changes of intergroup attitudes. The processes are related but not identical. For those whose prejudice is not too emotionally imbedded, the day-to-day experience of mixed schooling can often dispel racial illusions and groundless fears, thereby leading to school integration. On the other hand, desegregation can increase emotional distance—at least temporarily—for some Negro and white children who compensate for the greater classroom proximity by increased psychological withdrawal. The lag between behavioral and attitude change is familiar to psychiatrists. Behavior patterns can be changed through legislation, but not attitudes—at least not directly. This is not to imply that I think that legislative reform should await complete attitude change on the part of the public. On the contrary, when timed, as in this case, to coincide with significant shifts in popular sentiment, it has expedited the process of fuller public acceptance, despite some inevitable opposition. I do wish to stress, however, that people can comply with required modes of behavior more readily than with modes of feeling. The normal person can, within limits, control and regulate his behavior to conform to dictates of conscience, reason, and expediency even when this requires the overriding of some feelings and attitudes. How, when, and whether the changed behavior—in this instance, desegregation—initiates the complex inner processes of at-

titude changes essential for integration, depends on numerous factors and the varying specifics of each situation.

Many studies show that prejudiced attitudes are not inborn but that they are acquired in early childhood and re-enforced thereafter by support from the social environment. This implies that children can more readily dispense with prejudice in response to its reduction and elimination in their social worlds, of which school is a large part. By the same token, it seems unlikely that most American adults, even when they want to, can free themselves totally of racial attitudes which have been so deeply ingrained through early conditioning. A more realistic goal for parents and educators would seem to be their willingness to try for a more prejudice-free growing-up experience for the children of both races. This does not mean that Negro and white adults cannot and have not modified their previous racial fears and antipathies, nor does it lessen the desirability of making every effort to extend such change. For those people who are ashamed of residual prejudice which they cannot help feeling, it is healthier for all concerned if they can be aware of these self-discredited feelings instead of burying them. As psychiatrists, we may be in a position to help such people face and accept their inability to fully shed old bias, so that they may be freer to direct their actions in accordance with their present values and beliefs. Otherwise, as with all repressions, the denied feelings are apt to crop up in disguised forms.

Sometimes subtle, camouflaged discrimination can be even more destructive than the cruder open forms because of the confusions and inner conflicts it can arouse for both perpetrator and victim. Nevertheless, from the long view, some of these unconscious expressions of prejudice reflect stages of attitude change in the direction of ultimate progress in race relations. 'In-between' stages in the acceptance of desegregation have been described,[7] such as 'compartmentalizing,' 'denial of differences,' and 'mascot attitudes.' In the desegregating school situation, 'compartmentalizing' may be seen, for instance, when mixed faculties or parent groups meet together comfortably but feel uneasy at sharing a meal. Denial of all differences between Negro and white groups fails to recognize the results of differences in social realities which each has experienced. This can deprive children of either race of the desirable individualizing of educational needs, for example. And yet it does represent a forward step toward correcting the terrible fallacy whereby skin color difference has come to symbolize differences in human worth and virtue, with which it has no scientific correlation. In expressing the 'mascot' attitude as an in-between stage, some white people may overadmire the cuteness of Negro children, for instance. This is closely linked to white self-satisfaction for inviting 'token' Negroes to their homes or to some relatively high status positions. Negro recipients of these ostensible benefits are apt to react with mixed feelings of false pride and belittlement, both of which tax their personal adjustment. Obviously, such attitudes retain prejudice and obscure the white person's perception of the real qualities of the Negro person to whom he seems to relate. They do reflect movement, however, in traditional racial attitudes.

As children are caught up in the cross-currents of attitude change—and the intense resistance in the deep South may be viewed as a part of the desegregation process—some of them are indeed subjected to hurtful emotional pressures they would not otherwise face. Educators, parents, community leaders, and mental health personnel should band together to do everything possible to minimize the psychological hardships of the transition; in communities where this has been done, the traumata have been relatively minimal. From the long-range mental health standpoint, however, it seems preferable to risk some inevitable short-term, acute disturbances than to go on subjecting the child population to the more insidious, chronic, and less therapeutically accessible personality damage from segregation.

[7] Reference footnote 5.

In general, desegregation experience to date has shown that firm leadership and clear-cut policy, worked through by group process with all levels of the school and of the community, are effective ways to prepare local attitudes for successful change. Since most people's attitudes on the subject contain some degree of emotional conflict, they are especially susceptible to the influence of leadership and authority, which may tip the unstable balance of their contradictory feelings in either direction. The role of authority in this matter is complicated by interactions within each person of his several different kinds of conflict about authority. Thus, two such sets of authority conflicts are the residual inner conflicts from childhood reactions to parental authority, and the conflicts aroused by contradictory governmental directives. Everyone is subject to multiple governmental authorities—Federal, State, local—and usually to religious and other authorities as well. But how John Doe reacts when his current authorities oppose each other about desegregation is partly influenced by the original dictates of his parents on the issue and the extent to which he has freed himself from their internalized domination.

Instances of responsible educational leadership with sound administrative and pedagogical methods of school desegregation are illustrated by Louisville, Kentucky, Washington, D. C., and St. Louis, Missouri. On the other hand, Hoxie, Arkansas, and Clinton, Tennessee, typify communities where desegregation had started with relative smoothness but then was disrupted by the inciting of public opposition which reached levels of actual violence. In both cases there was significant interplay between the apparent personal conflicts of a leader—which seemed essentially unrelated to racial issues, although expressed through them—and the latent fears and conflicts among the townsfolk to whom he addressed himself. A dramatic example of contrasting types of leadership and their consequences was afforded last September in Little Rock, Arkansas, and Nashville, Tennessee. In Little Rock, a plan of gradual desegregation had majority public acceptance and the support of municipal officials. The opposition of the state's governor, however, had the effect of encouraging and legitimizing violence against desegregation. The subsequent chain of events has been such that the desegregation situation in Little Rock is still very tense, as already noted. Around the same time (September, 1957) an elementary school was dynamited in Nashville, where a few Negro children were entering a previously all-white school. Police restrained pro-segregationist demonstrators and arrested a score of them.[8] The state's governor promptly made it clear that the law of the land would be upheld in Tennessee, even though he did not personally like integration. By the end of the month the school scene was peaceful in Nashville, and it has remained so. The recent episode of bombing a Jewish Community Center there, which was linked to the desegregation issue, is being handled with similar firmness by the local authorities, public opinion, and the Nashville press.

Each community situation is, of course, unique, so that general principles must always be adapted to its particular needs. Nevertheless, the study of desegregation experiences elsewhere, with analysis of the factors that contributed to its going well or incurring problems, has proven helpful to local planning as well as to processes of group attitude-formation.

Many of the difficulties that complicate desegregation arise from problems ascribed to race but which are essentially nonracial in origin or only indirectly connected with race. Many prevalent Negro and white fears are based on what are mistakenly viewed as biological differences between Negro and white children, when they really stem from long years of racial discrimination. Because of the causal chain of racial prejudice, discrimination, and segregation, a disproportionately large number of this country's Negro citizens have lived under conditions of socioeconomic, cultural, and edu-

[8] Among these was John Kasper, who had also incited to violence against desegregation in Clinton, Tennessee, the previous year. Peaceful desegregation has been restored in Clinton.

cational deprivation. Therefore, more Negroes than whites may be expected to show the racially nonspecific effects of underprivilege. By the circular fallacies of prejudice, these nonracial handicaps, derived from segregation, are misconstrued as signs of racial inferiority to justify further segregation. The fundamental remedy lies in rectifying the pathogenic state of underprivilege. The goal of school desegregation is in line with such an approach. Perhaps I should parenthetically acknowledge that socioeconomic and cultural stratifications also exist among Negro people within the system of segregation. In discussing the relatively underprivileged position of Negroes in American life, I refer to the majority of them, and also as compared to the white population.

In attempting the tremendous task of reversing discrimination, members of both races do face some inevitable hardships from the cumulative damage it has caused. The social realities of underprivilege which whites have imposed on so many Negroes befits the mythical image of low Negro morality and intelligence. The conditions of social disorganization and deprivation, rationalized by the myth, have actually brought about a relatively high incidence, among Negroes, of antisocial behavior and scholastic disability, so that myth and reality can seem to fuse—a relationship which Merton has called "a self-fulfilling prophecy." [9] Perception of these actual current liabilities among Negroes, confusingly blended for many whites with anti-Negro fantasies, occasions many of the strongest fears of school desegregation by white people. Among these are sexual fears and fears of intermarriage, as well as the fear of lowered educational standards for white children.

Fears of intermarriage and interracial sexual fears are, of course, by no means identical. Thus, out-of-wedlock and casual interracial sex relations, in some locales, are condoned or even expected if, but only if, the partners are a white man and a Negro woman, while in the same community interracial marriage or sex relations between a Negro man and white woman, or even the flimsiest suspicion of it—as in the Till wolf-whistle case—are punishable by the most severe penalties. These contradictions and distinctions are cited to indicate the role of myth-formation, disguised as biological fact, in the interracial psychosexual sphere.

This aspect of Negro-white relations is so vital and so sensitive that psychodynamic discussion of it should not be attempted without fuller opportunity for elaboration than the brevity of this presentation permits. The Report which I have already cited [10] does go further into these matters. As psychiatrists, we are called upon, through consultation with school personnel and through direct services with children and parents, to help in this area, to which we need to bring the maximum of objectivity. Suffice it here to point out that irrational fantasies and unconscious fears and defenses play a prominent role behind the surface psychic positions that are maintained. With respect to the oft-expressed white fear that school desegregation threatens the purity of the white race by fostering Negro-white physical intimacies, it should be pointed out that racial amalgamation is already an accomplished fact in the United States. It might be said that this country's 'decision' to import Negro slaves, some 250 years ago, rather than the Supreme Court's Decision about schools, 'decided' the country on a course of biological admixture that has been under way in all segregated and nonsegregated regions of the nation ever since, regardless of how people feel about it.

The fearful expectation of increased intermarriage as a result of school desegregation expresses an emotional attitude or ignorance rather than a valid prediction, since available data about intermarriage rates from Northern cities, legally desegregated for years, is sparse and confusing, according to social science authorities. The ups and downs in inter-

[9] Robert K. Merton, *Social Theory and Social Structure;* Glencoe, Ill., The Free Press, 1949; see Ch. 7, "The Self-Fulfilling Prophecy," and especially p. 179.

[10] Reference footnote 5.

marriage rate over a period of time in these desegregated cities defies satisfactory explanation by the social scientists. Reliable predictions, therefore, as to whether, how, and when extending school desegregation to the South will influence the rate of intermarriage cannot yet be made. The readiness to predict, and with such certainty, by opponents of school desegregation would thus seem to bespeak their own bias, or be designed to arouse the emotions of others, whatever the objective facts in the matter may prove to be. There is special practical value in detecting the unreasoning nature of these frightened and frightening predictions because of their obstructive power against desegregation, especially for adolescents. Current accounts do indicate that social integration between Negro and white children, by and large, proceeds more rapidly and with greater acceptance at the elementary school level than in junior high school or high school. This seems explicable by at least two main factors: The adolescent at present brings to desegregated schooling longer exposure during formative years to attitude-conditioning by segregation than does the younger child. This obstacle to integration in the upper grades should be expected to lessen as desegregation continues. A second relevant dynamic factor, however, is that fears of interracial sex relations and intermarriage become heightened for the children of both races as they approach puberty, both on the part of their parents and teachers, and on the part of the youngsters themselves. With puberty all sexual anxieties become more acute, so that it is understandable that developmental sexual conflicts and interracial sexual conflicts should combine and augment each other. Some confirmation of this may be found in the fact that, in contrast to the high school situation, desegregation is generally reported as having gone extremely smoothly at colleges and universities. No doubt multiple factors account for this, including the selectivity by which a minority of Negroes are privileged to reach the higher educational level. One reason, however, may well be that the puberty phase is over, so that the late-adolescent college student is more psychosexually secure and stable than the high school teenager, and can thus emotionally afford, like the prepubertal youngster, greater interracial social mingling. The most likely solution for this second obstacle to high school desegregation would seem to be through the general reduction of prejudice, so that its load of irrational anxieties need not be added to normal strains of adolescent psychosexual development.

As to the prevalent fears about interracial schooling, with reference to Negro and white intelligence: Negro children as a group do indeed show academic retardation as compared to white children, on an over-all statistical basis at least, although many individual Negroes rank higher than many whites. However, there is no scientific evidence of innate difference in intelligence between the two groups, according to leading expert opinion. This is not refuted by reports of lower IQ ratings for some Negro children as compared to white, because psychometric test construction has not been free enough of cultural elements to measure validly the capacity of these children. Since the assumption of their racial inferiority has been the basis for separating them in segregated schools, such schools, by definition, cannot be equal, psychologically, to schools for white children. Nor have they been educationally equal, with rare exceptions, according to the usual indices for school evaluation. There is ample evidence, on the other hand, that the system of segregated schooling has entailed scholastic deprivation for Negro children.

With these facts at our disposal, perhaps we can help clarify some related misconceptions that underlie prevalent Negro and white fears of school desegregation: Negro fears of unequal scholastic competition with inevitable failure and humiliation; white fears of lowered educational standards. Meanwhile, we can join with the educators in helping academically retarded Negro children to catch up, while protecting the scholastic

needs of white pupils. Those of us who have worked in schools with a high census of underprivileged children—regardless of ethnic composition—know that enrichment of appropriate school resources is called for to offset the problems these children bring with them to school, such as their cultural impoverishment, their hopelessness or apathy toward learning, and their distrust of the majority group and of middle-class teachers. If long-standing educational and mental hygiene deficiencies persist when schools desegregate—such as oversized classes, inappropriate curriculums, inadequate counseling services, or poorly trained or demoralized teachers—the usual resulting problems cannot be accurately blamed on desegregation.

There is much more still to be learned by taking advantage of the rich research opportunities provided by this psychosocial change. Such studies should be ongoing, since new data will keep emerging as desegregation continues and extends. Thus with legal school desegregation in its second or third academic year in some schools, the kinds of problems to be dealt with are shifting as the process moves from one phase to another. There are also many relevant aspects of the topic which I have not discussed in this presentation, although some of them have been touched on elsewhere.[11] Thus I have not dealt with the many emotional readjustments to be made by Negro and white teachers who have to cope with their own reactions to new modes of intergroup relations, at the same time that they help the children with theirs. Nor have I gone into the many variables of personal and group dynamics in the children's responses to their new interracial experience with teachers and classmates, which are often complicated by a double standard for racial behavior within and outside of school.

The emotional tone of a school is a crucial factor in helping or hindering desegregation. In general, as clinicians we can share in maintaining a favorable school climate. One way is by preventing, reducing, and unraveling the racially conditioned misunderstandings that are apt to arise in these new situations among the children, parents, teachers, and administrators. Through psychodynamic insight we can help avoid the reading-in of racial factors where they do not belong, or the disregarding of them when they do. Both mistakes make for a tension-arousing school atmosphere.

In conclusion, having focused so much on the psychodynamic challenges of school desegregation, I should like to reemphasize how much promise it holds for the improvement of mental health in this country and for the release of productive energies so long wasted and bound up in interracial tension.

930 Fifth Avenue
New York 21, New York

[11] Reference footnote 5. See also Viola W. Bernard, "Some Psychodynamic Aspects of Desegregation," *Amer. J. Orthopsychiatry* (1956) 26:459-466.